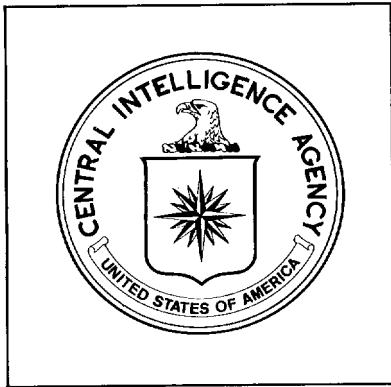


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MIDDLE EAST – AFRICA – SOUTH ASIA

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Arab States

*Palestinians May Press Islamic States
for New Move Against Israel in UN*

The Palestine Liberation Organization may try, at the forthcoming Islamic foreign ministers' conference, to activate a contingency project for forcing Israel out of the United Nations' General Assembly. The PLO's leading expert on UN affairs will be part of the Palestinian observer delegation at the conference, which opens in Jidda on July 12.

The possibility of an Arab-orchestrated effort to suspend Israel's voting rights in the UN General Assembly has been floating around Third World capitals at least since the suspension of South Africa from the 29th Assembly session late last year. Syria was an early and active proponent of the idea, backed by Algeria and Iraq.

More recently, spokesmen for the PLO's political department have been discussing the project in Beirut newspaper articles and interviews and predicting that it will be taken up at the Islamic foreign ministers' conference, and, later this summer, at the Organization of African Unity meeting in Kampala and the non-aligned states' meeting in Lima. The Palestinian author of a long article on why and how Israel should be forced out of the UN will be attending the Jidda conference.

The conference agenda, however, makes no mention of the issue and the PLO delegation has no authority to raise it.

Syrian diplomats at the UN are cool to raising the issue at this time. They are said to believe that the threat of suspension should be withheld pending the outcome of current efforts to reach another interim agreement on Israeli withdrawals in the Sinai and Golan, a process in which Israel is perceived to be on the defensive. According

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to these diplomats, a move against Israel might well be postponed until next year's General Assembly session. This is likely to be the attitude of the Egyptians as well, and together with the Syrians and the Saudis they should be able to stave off for now any efforts by the Palestinians to accelerate the move.

It could well be a different story, however, if between now and September the disengagement process should break down or if Israel itself were to make such an issue of the threat to its UN status as to provoke another assertion of the Third World's voting power in the Assembly. European foreign ministries, responding to expressions of concern from the US, are currently making strenuous but low-key efforts to dissuade Arab and African diplomats from drawing parallels between the South African and Israeli cases. Israeli commentators are urging that a US pledge to leave the Assembly if Israel is forced out be made part of any Sinai disengagement agreement. The most likely prospect is that the issue will sputter along throughout the summer but will not take fire at the UN unless the principal Arab states then feel the need to put extraordinary pressure on Israel and its Western supporters. (SECRET NO FOREIGN DISSEM/NO DISSEM ABROAD/BACKGROUND USE ONLY/CONTROLLED DISSEM)

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SECRETNorth Yemen*Hamdi Continues Efforts to Monopolize Power*

Having neutralized potential rivals in the army this spring, Colonel Ibrahim Hamdi, head of the ruling command council, has made two additional moves this month to tighten his grip on power in North Yemen. One step suggests an effort will be made to portray Sheikh Abdallah al-Ahmar, speaker of the Consultative Assembly, as being at the center of a coup plot. The second is a move by Hamdi to turn the Confederation of Yemen Development Associations into a quasi-political organization through which he can cultivate grass-roots ties in the civilian sector.

The US embassy has been told by a North Yemeni official that security officers discovered on July 2 a "packet of letters" written by al-Ahmar to North Yemeni royalists living in exile in Saudi Arabia. The letters allegedly asked for the royalists' aid in a plan to overthrow the Hamdi government. The North Yemeni official said that Sana did not intend to indulge in the public execution of traitors, but that al-Ahmar and others like him will not be allowed to play any future political role.

We cannot discount the veracity of the story of the letters' discovery, but it did occur at a very opportune time for Hamdi. Not only do they give Hamdi another handle to use against the conservative tribal sheikh in domestic politics, but they also well serve Hamdi in his dealings with Saudi Arabia. The North Yemenis point out that al-Ahmar has long been the Saudis' chosen instrument and from that they conclude that Riyadh must have been aware of the plotting--the letters were allegedly uncovered on a Saudi airliner in Sana. The failure of Riyadh to follow up on its long-standing financial commitment to aid in the modernization of Sana's military is reportedly seen by Hamdi as a tactic to allow the plotters an opportunity to carry out their plans. North Yemen is now arguing that the Saudis would be well advised to throw their weight behind Hamdi and stop supporting discredited tribal politicians.

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Colonel Hamdi has also recently endorsed new and more democratic procedures for the elections of governing boards of more than forty local development associations to be chosen this month. He called upon the electors to break the stranglehold of tribal leaders over these development organizations. Hamdi has been active in affairs of one of the local associations, as well as the Confederation of Yemen Development Associations--the umbrella organization--for several years. He is now clearly trying to forge even closer ties with the local associations so as to create a stronger civilian political base.

The local development authorities are a curious blend of governmental and private interests. They had their origin during the early stages of the 1962-1970 civil war when the central government found itself unable to sponsor socio-economic development projects. In early 1973, the local bodies formed the Confederation to provide staffing and expertise and to represent them with the Central Planning Office and other government bodies. (SECRET)

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